Rural IT Centres

2962. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up Rural Information Technology Centres or Samadhan Kendra in Andhra Pradesh to provide connectivity to Internet, E-mail and Computer facilities to the villagers of the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise;

(c) whether Government propose to set up more Samadhan Kendras in the State in the near future; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Department of Information Technology (DIT) has established one Samadhan Kendra at Tadepalligudem, West Godavari District, 1095 internet dhabas have been opened in Andhra Pradesh by franchisees of BSNL out of 1104 Block Head Quarters (BHQs). However, internet access has been extended in all BHQs of AP.

A Pentium IV Computer as server with Internet and E-mail facility has been installed at this Samadhan Kendra and information on 20 villages provided as text, graphics and audio. Villagers can also access information on various health schemes, Agriculture scheme (Pest management, crop details, seed management etc.) and village self help groups. BSNL through PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) has offered one free internet connection to each of the Rural Block Headquarters through its franchisees.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Leave for Extra Departmental Staff

2963. SHRI DARA SINGH CHAUHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether extra departmental staff are allowed ten days leave in a year provided they arrange for substitute;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware that leave facilities to the extra departmental staff under Bihar Sheriff Circle have been stopped through a verbal order;

(d) if so, the details in this regard and the reasons therefore; and

(e) what steps Government propose to take to restore the leave facilities in order to bring uniformity throughout the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Consequent upon implementation of recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee constituted to examine system of Extra Departmental Agents, now called Gramin Dak Sevaks, their conditions of employment, wage structure etc., ten days' paid leave for every half year without facility of carry forward or encashment was introduced, *vide* Government orders dated 17.12.98. In addition to paid leave, Gramin Dak Sevaks can also avail leave without allowances upto a maximum of 180 days in a year which can further be relaxed in exceptional cases like genuine illness. The Gramin Dak Sevak is required to provide substitute to man the post if this arrangement is felt necessary by the leave sanctioning authority. In such cases, substitute is paid minimum of the Time Related Continuity Allowance (TRCA) whereas the regular Gramin Dak Sevak gets his allowance as usual for the period of paid leave.

(c) to (e) The leave facility to the Gramin Dak Sevaks in Nalanda Division, Bihar Sheriff or in any Division in Bihar Circle has not been stopped by any verbal orders. The provision of paid leave and leave without allowances is uniformly applicable to all Gramin Dak Sevaks throughout the country.

Quality of Cellular and Basic Phone Services

†2964. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.